

The Victorian Gothic



The Victorian age is *the* Gothic age. The critic Julian Wolfreys points out that for the Victorians themselves, the Gothic was literally everywhere: 'all that black, all that crepe, all that jet and swirling fog... These and other phenomena, such as the statuary found in Victorian cemeteries like Highgate are discernible as being fragments and manifestations of a haunting, and, equally, haunted, "Gothicized" sensibility'. The period was certainly a particularly fertile time for the production of monsters, and these monsters have refused to go away, with figures like Jekyll and Hyde, Carmilla, and Count Dracula, sustained and constantly reimagined by both high and popular culture, almost becoming mythic beings in the process.

This one-semester module will provide an introduction to monstrosity as an important part of Victorian culture. We will examine versions of the monstrous which emerged in the Victorian period in a broad historical and cultural context. Students will be

offered a critical introduction to the various ways in which significant theoretical developments have influenced interpretations of the Gothic, and will be encouraged to use and challenge important critical terms and ideas within their own analyses.



This module will be assessed by one 5,000 word essay.

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Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of the module a student should be able to:

1. Trace important continuities as well as distinctions between the ways in which these texts mobilise Gothic tropes and structures.
2. Recognise definitions of genre and be able to contribute critically to the debates about the extent and the limits of the Gothic.
3. Employ the significant terms, distinguish between the different contexts and take an active part in debates that have been generated by critical discussions of Gothic literature and theory.
4. Examine historical and literary contexts for the production of monstrosity.

Schedule:

Week One: Introduction.

Week Two: Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (1847).

Week Three: Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847).

Week Four: George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil* (1859)

Week Five: Elizabeth Gaskell, 'Lois the Witch' (1861)

Week Six: Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, *Carmilla* (1871-72).

Week Seven: Reading Week

Week Eight: Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886).

Week Nine: Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890-91).

Week Ten: H. G. Wells, *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896).

Week Eleven: Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897).

Week Twelve: Ghost Stories by Dinah Craik, Amelia Edwards, and Rhoda Broughton.